

PREFACE

To the book by Nono Sumampouw, *Menjadi Manado: Torang Samua Basudara, Sabla Aer, dan Pembentukan Identitas Sosial*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 2015.

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It is an honour for me to be given the opportunity to write some introductory words to this important study.

This engaging book about the northernmost part of Sulawesi should be welcomed for the pertinence of the theme, the original approach and for the subject of study, the city of Manado.

It presents us a portrait of Manado society, which is not a sheer description and enumeration of facts. Rather, Manado is depicted in the true anthropological spirit, based on case studies, observations, interviews and with the addition of a personal flavour. How does the city look like, at a distance and on closer inspection? How is life in the various neighbourhoods? How are the smells and the noises? With some imagination, answers to these questions are suggested in this work, which conveys a vivid and entertaining account of the looks and the lives of Manado. The book includes a treasure of narratives, brief and striking quotations from Manado inhabitants, lyrics of songs, mass media and facebook quotations, and well-chosen pictures.

But this work is more than a collection of good stories well told - these stories are a tool for the signalling and understanding of some major and topical problematics, in particular that of group identity. In the discussion of these, the author reveals a solid academic training and his familiarity with the relevant theories of the social sciences is obvious. These more theoretical parts are well-written and smooth, comparing and commenting different theories and authors and assessing their usefulness in general and for this study in particular.

«Identity» is one of the most-debated issues world-wide in numerous scientific areas, ranging from psychology to social anthropology and political sciences - and many more. Regarding northern Sulawesi, it has been a topic of many researchers (both Indonesian and foreign), but also and most saliently of civil organizations. The discussion about Minahasa identity, or the identity of the various ethno-linguistic groups, has since many decades received much interest and attention and has had its political and administrative impacts, most recently in the period of *pemekeran*, the process of splitting up of administrative territories, thereby granting them a greater autonomy. For the identity, or, more accurately, “identities” of Manado, the attention has been less manifest and this book should be seen as a much-needed contribution to the filling of this gap.

Group identity may be based on ethnicity, religion, territory, but it also needs a different group or category from which it can distinguish itself. There are well-known notions attached to this feeling, which the author of this work, related to identity of

Manado inhabitants, alternatively and according to context indicates with: “them and us”; “in-group and out-group”; “torang and dorang” or “non-Sabla Aer and Sabla Aer”. From anthropological literature we know that the degree of importance of these distinctions depends much on the situation. Identity, including the distinction between groups, is subject to contextual variability. Frontiers between groups which sometimes seem difficult to bridge may disappear when these groups are confronted with a common adversary, as has been well argued in the work of such classical anthropologists as Evans-Pritchard and Fredrick Barth.

On a personal note, I welcome this work because of my own interest and even affection for this region where my husband and I have had the privilege to live for a considerable period of time, in the beginning of the 1980s. Our homebase was in the Tontemboan-speaking inland (*gunung*) but inevitably, and with fascination, I became familiar with the world of Manado city. This familiarity was updated during my visit in 2004 when I witnessed the great changes which had taken place in a few decades and were still taking place. This book has helped me to know more about present-day Manado and also brought to mind relevant historical data about northern Sulawesi.

Since the first records about North Sulawesi and its contacts with the outer world, the area where now Manado is situated has been developing from a frontier region to a densely-populated, multicultural, multi-ethnic city. A role was played by the establishment at that place of the main regional offices of the VOC and later of the Netherlands East Indies government. The town gained geostrategic importance and as a trade hub attracted people from the eastern archipelago but in reality from all over the world. From the sources dating from the colonial period which I consulted, the idea rises of Manado as a miniature «plural society», a medley of population groups who, in the words of John Furnivall, mix but do not combine.

The archives of colonial government and of Christian missions give evidence of the presence of Europeans, in administrative or commercial jobs, assisted by Eurasians and members of the Minahasa elite. In trade, in particular ethnic Chinese and Arabs were active, while Sangirese and Gorontaloese were to be found in harsh, menial jobs. Of course there lived many ethnic Minahasans in Manado as well, but they were not a clear majority. For example in 1930, the year an official population census was held, they accounted for half of the city’s population. A good picture of the sprawling life among the diverse population of this city is grasped when going through the pages of *Tjahaja Sijang*, the regional journal founded in 1868 on the initiative of Protestant missionaries. Alongside some more descriptive and reflective articles about, for example, the growing immigration of Sangirese, or the possible expansion of the Islamic population in Minahasa, this periodical also includes reports of sports events or meetings of associations, and the details show that the membership files of these groups often were based on ethnicity. In addition, the numerous advertisements of shops or other companies with Chinese or European names are significant.

But it is not appropriate to dwell any further on my own research and personal memories. Important for now, is that the world has been enriched with a high-quality and entertaining book about northern Sulawesi, written by a local author. It is highly recommendable.